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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0617

RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2159

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0964

RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0189

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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0632

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000306

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM MR

SUBJECT: FNDD LOSES FAITH IN SENEGALESE MEDIATION AS IT

PREPARES TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTION

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 290

Classified By: Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reas
ons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The FNDD sees less and less utility in a Senegalese mediation. Despite initial positive signs from Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, the FNDD thinks President Wade was steered away by Aziz. The FNDD was upset that Wade accepted the regime Ambassador's credentials (after holding that off for months) even as he said he was trying to position himself as a mediator. Abdallahi wanted to be received as Head of State but Wade said he was "unavailable" to meet at the airport on the two alternate days they proposed. That may be seen as petty, but the Senegalese also said Abdallahi could not visit with Senegalese parliamentarians or even the Mauritanian community in Senegal. The FNDD seems increasingly resigned to the June 6 elections going forward and have already started talking post-election strategy. End summary.

NO HEAD OF STATE HONORS FOR ABDALLAHI

¶2. (C) Charge and PolOff met April 28 with FNDD Foreign Minister Mohamed Ould Maouloud, who explained that President Abdallahi had "postponed" his trip to Senegal as he did not see convincing signs that he would be received with Head of State honors. President Wade was not available to receive President Abdallahi at the airport on two alternate dates proposed by President Abdallahi, who would be instead greeted by the Prime Minister or by a group of ministers. Moreover, Senegalese protocol stated that President Abdallahi should limit himself to seeing Wade and should not meet with the Mauritanian community or parliamentarians. President Abdallahi was also offended that the Senegalese, after waiting for months, accepted the regime Ambassador's credentials the day before President Abdallahi's planned arrival. For Ould Maouloud, this could be an internal struggle between the protocol and the Foreign Minister but it most likely points to "sabotage" from General Aziz. Ould Maouloud said he would not be surprised that the junta plotted with Senegalese contacts to poison the water and put obstacles to the visit. The FNDD senses the Senegalese attitude has changed and doubts they are well disposed to

play a meaningful mediation role.

MOVING FORWARD

¶3. (C) Ould Maouloud stated that the FNDD has identified two travel opportunities for President Abdallahi -- one to South Africa and the other to Burkina Faso. According to Ould Maouloud, the FNDD is seeking an invitation for President Abdallahi to Zuma's inauguration. South Africa has already stated they would not invite junta members from Guinea, Madagascar or Mauritania and the FNDD thinks the South Africans could send a strong statement in support of democracy by inviting deposed President Abdallahi.

¶4. (C) The international community sent a bad message by not applying individual sanctions, said Ould Maouloud. He believes that sanctions would have dissuaded Aziz from moving forward with the June 6 elections. He said he was disappointed by the African Union for not following up on such matters and said he did not understand how the AU Peace and Security Council had not yet scheduled a meeting on Mauritania. Implicit but not stated was his disappointment that U.S. targeted financial sanctions are yet to be seen.

¶5. (C) Ould Maouloud criticized the ambivalent French position, which obstructed all efforts to dissuade Aziz. Aziz has been bragging that the French said they would recognize him after the election and that the other countries

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would follow little by little. Maouloud stated that Aziz was receiving support from businessman Mohamed Hmayenne Bouamatou and from a French Embassy diplomat as well as members of Francafrique. Nevertheless, he said Aziz was loathed and there was an ongoing campaign against him. Aziz can only prevail through force and Mauritania was entering very dangerous times.

¶6. (C) Ould Maouloud stated the FNDD would "take to the streets" to boycott the election. They are already planning demonstrations with labor unions and civil society within the framework of NDI's Coordination of Democratic Forces (CFD). Ould Maouloud noted he had completed work with the unions and civil society to form the CFD to help bring together unified actions and present an image beyond political parties -- even as he noted the parties have the best experience in this sort of thing. He noted each subgroup will support efforts by the others. For instance, the parties will support anti-coup labor demonstrations on May Day. Demonstrations are slated for April 29 in front of the Justice Palace with other events planned every few days thereafter. According to Ould Maouloud, Aziz will lead a confrontational electoral campaign that he described as a "power struggle." For Ould Maouloud, the President of the Senate and now interim President Ba M'Bare has the power to postpone the election. Ould Maouloud believes that if the unrest gets out of control, M'Bare may take the decision to postpone. According to the constitution, elections have to be held within three months of a presidential vacancy unless a major obstacle prevents it. Maouloud also stated that Aziz has mobilized between 150-200 BASEP elements dressed as civilians to protect him during his campaign.

¶7. (C) Ould Maouloud told Charge he did not know who was behind the recent spate of fire-bombings of government vehicles. He noted the regime was quick to point a finger at the FNDD for these "terrorist" acts -- an allegation he firmly denied. He saw three possible sources for the attacks: the once clandestine Conscience and Resistance Movement; a gang fight between the young white moor kids of regime officials; or, most likely, a staged event by intelligence head General Hady that the regime could use as a pretext for a crack-down.

¶8. (C) Comment: Ould Maouloud seemed resigned to the June 6 election and already planning for a post-election strategy.

The Senegalese mediation is most likely the last mediation effort we will see. The junta's ability to influence Mauritania's neighbors in its favor is a cause for concern. The FNDD and the opposition are intent on boycotting the election and, as the June 6 date approaches, we should expect increased civil unrest. Nevertheless, if the opposition cannot keep a united front, the post-election strategy seems uncertain. Ould Maouloud told Charge he is already engaged in talks with the FNDD leadership as well as the RFD to develop a "post election" strategy. He lamented, however, that there is no agreement on an exit strategy. End comment.

HANKINS